



Mr. *Cooke's*

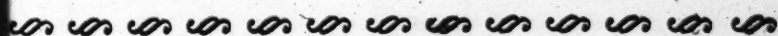
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Association
of Ministers in *Danbury*,
July 29th. 1741.





Divine Sovereignty in the Salvation
of Sinners, consider'd and im-
prov'd.



IN A

S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Eastern Asso-
ciation of *Fairfield* County, on a
publick Lecture in DANBURY,
July 29th. 1741.

Publish'd at the Desire of the MINISTERS associated,
and others present.

By SAMUEL COOKE, *M. A.* *K*
Pastor of the Church in *Stratfield*.

MATTH. xx. 15. *Is it not lawful for me to do what I
will with mine own? Is thine Eye evil because I am
good?*

BOSTON, Printed by G. ROGERS, for
J. EDWARDS in Cornhill, 1741.

Divine Sovereignty in the Salvation
 of Sinners, considered and im-
 proved.

By Samuel Cook, M. A.

IN A
 SERMON

Preach'd before the English As-
 sembly of New York County, on a
 publick Lecture in Danbury,



Printed at the University of Cambridge.

By SAMUEL COOK, M. A.
 Rector of the Church in Danbury.

MATTHEW. XX. 15. It is not lawful for me to do what I
 will, neither mine own, but the will of him that sent me.

Boston, Printed by G. Rogers, for
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Divine SOVEREIGNTY

In The

Salvation of Sinners

Consider'd and Improv'd.



Exodus xxxiii. 19.

*— And will be gracious to whom I
will be gracious, and will shew
Mercy to whom I will shew Mercy.*

IN the foregoing Verse, *Moses* addresseth the Lord with this Request, *I beseech thee shew me thy Glory*. Never mere Man since the Fall in this Life had been honoured with so frequent, intimate and long continued Converse and communion with God as *Moses*, like a Man with a Friend, and very lately, for forty Days together without Intermission: And yet, at the farthest Remove from a surfeiting Satiety, he still earnestly desires Acquaintance with God in a higher Measure. Whereupon we may Observe,
That those who are blessed with a saving Acquaintance with God and some Measure of spiritual Communion

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munion with him, are coveting still more and more of the Knowledge of God in Christ Jesus. Indeed their Desires after other Objects are hereby in a great Degree superseded, as appears by the Profession of the Psalmist, *Psal. 73. 25. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth, that I desire besides thee* And of Paul, *Philp. 3. 8. Yea doubtless, and I count all Things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and do count them but Dung that I may win Christ.*

But their Appetite after more is raised by the Taste they have had of the Sweetness of Communion with God in Christ. It's a sad Symptom, that he is wholly a Stranger to any saving Acquaintance and Communion with God, who hath enough of it and desires no more.

But to return to *Moses's Prayer, I beseech thee shew me thy Glory*, that is, make me to see thy Glory, make it some Way or other visible to me.

We know *Moses* was not so ignorant as to think that God's proper Essence could be seen by bodily Eyes; but having hitherto only heard a Voice out of a Pillar of Cloud and Fire, he now desir'd to see some Representation of the divine Glory, such as God might see fit to gratify him with. Thus much of *Moses's Request*.

In the Sequel we have God's gracious Reply to his Suit.

P. God in Mercy denies Moses that which was not fit to be granted him, and which even Moses himself could not have born, ver. 20. And he said thou canst not see my Face, for there shall no Man see me and live.

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Many Times it's best, we have not in Specie what we ask for. It was best for *Moses* that he was so deny'd. A clear Sight of the Glory of God would quite overpower the Faculties of any mortal man in the present State. It is in Compassion to our Frame, that God *holdeth back the Face of his Throne and spreadeth a Cloud upon it.* But

2. God grants unto *Moses* what shall be abundantly satisfying. He shall hear what would please him, ver. 19. *I will make all my Goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious &c.* as in the Text. This was the best Answer to *Moses* his Request. *Shew me thy Glory,* says he, and God graciously answers by telling him, *I will shew thee my Goodness &c.* God's Goodness is his Glory, and he would have us know him by the Glory of his Mercy, rather than by the Glory of his Majesty. Now the Height of God's Goodness even the special Glory of it, is the sovereignty thereof, held forth most clearly in our text.

It's the Glory of the Goodness of God, that he, as an absolute Proprietor, makes what Difference he pleases in the Bestowment of his Gifts; as not being debtor nor accountable to any. *May not he do what he will with his own?*

It's the Glory of Divine Goodness, that all his Reasons of Mercy are fetcht from within himself, not from any Thing in the Creature which is the designed Subject of it. As he hath Mercy on whom he will, so it is because he will, as our blessed *Jesus* takes Notice, *Mat. 11. 26. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy Sight.*

As

Many

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As for the Displays of divine Wrath, these are not merely sovereign and arbitrary : There is always a Reason for it found in the Creature. God never says, I will be angry at whom I will be angry ; for his Wrath is always just and holy. But he says, *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious* &c ; for his Grace is always free and arbitrary. God never damns by Prerogative, but he always saves by Prerogative.

What I shall further offer on this Subject will be in clearing up and applying this

D O C T R I N E.

The Mercy of God to any of his sinful Creatures hath it's Foundation in and takes it's Rise from his mere sovereign, arbitrary good Pleasure.

This great and fundamental Doctrine of the Gospel, because it is wholly subversive of all carnal Dependence, we have naturally, through the wretched Pride of our Hearts, a very great and fatal Aversion to. But it is truly most useful and encouraging to poor Sinners enquiring the Way to Zion with their Faces thitherward ; as well as most refreshingly sweet and delightful to those, who are bro't savingly home to God in Christ, and have found him, whom their Souls love, and after whom they have been sorrowing ; as may be herein after more particularly considered.

This Doctrine I shall endeavour to illustrate, by considering sundry Instances of the Grace and Mercy of God towards some of his sinful Creatures, respecting their everlasting Welfare ; and observe as I pass along, that these all have their Foundation in, and take

ake their Rise from God's mere sovereign good Pleasure.

I. A notable Instance of the adorable Goodness and Mercy of God is his gracious Design of the Recovery and Salvation of any of his fallen, sinful and miserable Creatures.

That the glorious God has entertain'd and formed such a gracious Design, is not the Thing which I now intend to prove, nor do we need to have it proven to us, who enjoy the Light of the glorious Gospel, and who universally assent to it, as a Point out of all Dispute.

What I am to shew is, that this gracious Design of God flows from his own mere sovereign good Pleasure. This will appear, if we consider

1. That no Wrong had been done the sinful fallen Creature, if it had been eternally abandoned unto remediless Ruin.

What is strictly a Point of Justice is not arbitrary but necessary; and the Subject is really wronged that is denied any Good, to which it hath a Claim: But there is no Wrong done to the Subject from whom it is with-holden only that which he hath no just Claim to: Therefore the sinful fallen Creature had not been wrong'd, if there never had been any Design laid for his Recovery and Salvation: Here, *every Mouth must be stopped and all the sinful World become guilty before God.* It's therefore apparent, that it's owing only to the sovereign good Pleasure of God, that a Design is laid for the Recovery and Salvation of any sinful fallen Creatures. Moreover,

2. God could have recovered his own Glory effectually to all Intents and Purposes, of his sinful fallen Creatures, without designing their Recovery. God

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hath indeed made all Things for his own Glory. And he must not, nor can he be frustrated of this his End. But he may freely chuse the Way, wherein he will have his Glory of any of his Creatures. It is certain, that God is glorified in the eternal Destruction of some as well as in the eternal Salvation of others. *The Lord is known by the Judgment, which he executeth; the Wicked shall be turned into Hell and all the Nations that forget God, Psalm 9. 16, 17.*

The Apostle Paul plainly tells, that God may and will have his Glory as well in the Destruction, as in the Salvation of Sinners, *Rom. 9. 22, 23.* which read at Leisure. Yea, the very Goodness of God had been sufficiently emblazon'd, without supposing a Design of the Recovery and Salvation of any fallen Creatures; I mean his Goodness in Creation, and his infinite Condescension in binding himself in Covenant, to reward with an happy Immortality that perfect Obedience, which the intelligent Creature was made capable of yielding, and which God might (if he pleased) have exacted of him in Right of his own absolute Sovereignty. Again consider,

3. God's great End in designing the Recovery and Salvation of any of his fallen Creatures, is the Manifestation of the Riches of his Grace, as you may see in *Eph. 1. 4, 5, 6, 7.* Now the Glory of Divine Grace consists not only in it's being conferred on the unworthy and ill-deserving, nor merely in the Readiness and Willingness of God in bestowing the same; but also supposeth in God a perfect and absolute Liberty on both Sides equally: That is either to grant or with-hold as seems good to him. Take away this absolute Liberty, as they do who deny the mere Sovereignty of Divine Grace, and you wretchedly

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retchedly eclipse the Glory of it. Once more here consider,

4. The Design of the Recovery of any fallen Creature is by a Surety of God's own providing; which further proves divine Sovereignty to be the Foundation and Source of it.

It might perhaps be accounted too bold for us to say or think, that God could not, in any other Way than by Way of Suretiship, have provided for the Sinner's Salvation. But this we may venture to say, viz. not only, that this is the only Way, which God hath been pleased to reveal to us, but also that we are not capable of conceiving of any other Way consistent with the Glory and Honour of all the divine Attributes. Now it is against all Reason to suppose, that when the sinful Creature had rejected God and thereby ruined himself, God should be under any Necessity of accepting a Ransom offered by another instead of the Sinner; his Crime being capital: Much less can God be supposed holden, to provide for a Sinner such a Ransom. The Matter must be resolved into the sovereign and arbitrary good pleasure of God.

II. Another Instance of the Mercy of God towards fallen Creatures, wherein his Sovereignty is exemplified is this, viz. that this merciful Design of God terminates on Man, exclusive of the fallen Angels.

That this is the Case we all own and must do so, we give Credit to the divine Oracles, wherein this is most clearly revealed; therefore I shall not say to prove it: But pass on to shew, that we have here in this Instance a clear Proof of the absolute Sovereignty of Divine Grace. Here consider,

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1. There is Nothing in Man conceivable, which is not to be found in the sinning Angels, which might make Man rather chosen for a Subject of Mercy than Devils. Are the Devils deserving God's Wrath and Curse forever for Rebellion and Enmity against God? So is Man.

And if any suppose, that mere Misery itself does in some Respects, recommend the Subject to Mercy; it must be allowed, that Devils, in this Regard, stand as fair Candidates for Mercy as Men, if not fairer; for they are doubtless as miserable and as sensibly so as Men are, excepting only that they have not this to reflect upon, as Gospel Sinners have, that they have rejected rendered Salvation.

The Misery of the Creature may be be considered as the Object, but not as the first Motive of divine Mercy.

2. The Glory of divine Grace would have as much appeared in the Salvation of Devils as of Men. It's so clear that there needs not a Word to be said in it's Confirmation.

3. Carnal Men have the very same Pride, Enmity and Antipathy against the Way of Salvation which God hath provided, until it be slain by the mighty Power of God, as Devils themselves can be supposed to have. The Apostle tells us, Rom. 8. 7. *The carnal Mind is Enmity against God, &c.* And God could have designed and effected a Conquest over the Enmity of Devils, as well as of Men. Yea,

4. What Odds their appears betwixt sinful Angels and sinful Men, would have led us, rather to have thought them the more likely Objects of designed Mercy, than Men; by Reason of the Superiority of their natural Capacity for the Service and Glory of God;

God ; had they been recovered to Holiness and Happiness.

III. The Sovereignty of God is discovered in this, viz. that some, not all of the sinful human Race are the designed Subjects of Recovery and Salvation by Jesus Christ. It's certain, that some only, and not all of the Individuals of Mankind are the designed Subjects of this Recovery. We all readily yield that this Recovery does not in Fact take Place in the Case of all, but of some only ; upon which it will follow, that it was not designed for all, but for some only : Unless we suppose (what is most absurd) that God may be frustrated of his own Design and Purpose. Now, what Reason for this can we give, saving the mere Sovereignty of divine Grace ? Sure none at all. For,

1. The Remedy provided is of Value enough for the Recovery and Salvation of all, were the Number a Million Times as great as it is. What is sufficient for any One must be of an infinite Value : And what is infinite is sufficient for all. The Apostle, speaking of Christ, says, Col. 1. 16. *It pleases the Father, that in him should all Fulness dwell.*

2. It was not necessary for the Honour of God's vindictive Justice, that some should be secluded from, when others are admitted to partake in the designed Recovery by Jesus Christ : for Divine Justice and Vengeance never sat in such Triumph as on the Cross of Christ.

3. If all as well as any had been the designed Subjects of this Recovery by Jesus Christ, the Mercy of God would have had so many more everlasting Monuments.

4. What

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4. All are alike involv'd in Guilt, expos'd to the Wrath of God and tremendous Curses of the Law ; and alike naturally indispos'd to accept of the Remedy provided. This Case therefore must be resolv'd into divine Sovereignty.

IV. That only some of the Children of Men enjoy the external Means of Grace and Salvation is owing to God's mere sovereign good Pleasure. You know this is Fact, some only, exclusive of others, enjoy the outward Means of Grace and Salvation. This was for many Ages the peculiar Privilege of the Israelites, exclusive of all other Nations, *Psal.* 147. 19, 20. And now its the distinguishing Privilege of the Christian Nations, not common to all Mankind. This flows from the mere arbitrary good Pleasure of God : As *Moses* in the Name of God assures the Israelites, that they might not vaunt themselves, *Deut.* 7. 6, 7, 8. And as our Saviour assures us, *Mat.* 11. 25, 26. *I thank thee, O Father Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes : even so, Father, for so it seem'd good in thy Sight.*

V. That only some are awakened, convinc'd and converted by the Ministry of the Word ; when others enjoying the same or the like outward Advantages and Helps are never the better therefor, arises from God's arbitrary and sovereign good Pleasure. At the same Time when *Lydia's Heart was opened*, that she attended to the Things spoken by *Paul*, in a sound Conversion ; there were many others present, who probably were not at all wrought upon for their good, *Acts* 16. 13, 14. Of *Peter's Hearers* there were

were Three Thousand converted by one rowzing Sermon, *Acts* 2. 14---41. But of *Stephen's* Hearers we don't know that there was so much as one converted by his Sermon, very much of the same Kind and Tendency with the former : These, instead of kindly Convictions, were filled with a blood-thirsty Rage against their faithful Reprover, *Acts* 7. 54 &c. *Felix* met with a Shock of Conviction that set him a trembling, *Acts* 24. 25. as well as the Jaylor, *Acts* 16. 29. of which one only issued in Conversion. Thus it hath been in all Ages and Places of Christianity, to the present : And perhaps there has scarcely ever been a Period, since the Apostolick Age, wherein hath been more conspicuous than in the present Day, what the Apostle *Paul* observed in his Time; *2 Cor.* 2. 15, 16. *We are unto God a sweet Saviour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish : To the one we are a Saviour of Death unto Death, and to the other a Saviour of Life unto Life.* Now whence comes this Difference ? Is it because of something distinguishingly found in some to recommend them to God above others ? No, no. Those distinguishingly favoured with saving Grace, under the same Means which evidently prove hardning to others, must and will assign it to meer sovereign Grace. *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy, Rom.* 9. 16. Although we are to work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling ; Yet we are to know, that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his own good Pleasure, *Philip.* 2. 12, 13.

Having thus illustrated and confirmed the Doctrine, I proceed to the

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A P P L I C A T I O N.

USE I. Hence infer, that its a great Mistake and of very dangerous Consequence, which many carnal Persons under the Gospel fall into, who will perswade themselves, that they are able (with the common Concurrence of divine Providence in upholding their Beings and Faculties) to do that which hath a certain Connection with, or which shall assuredly issue in their Conversion and eternal Salvation. By Conversation with sundry Persons considerably concern'd for their Souls, I find this Mistake is inbibed and deeply rooted ; and it may be so in many more than I am aware of. I believe, that upon Inquiry most of you if not all, will at once readily own, and think you do it sincerely too ; that you have never done nor can do any Thing, which is properly meritorious of Grace and Glory, as Labours are of Wages. No, your Hope is in Christ and in him alone. But yet you secretly think, that you either have done, or can and will do that which hath a sure Connection with your spiritual and eternal Welfare. You will own, you can't repent of your Sins savingly in your own Strength, can't turn your *Heart of Stone into an Heart of Flesh*, can't believe in Christ to the saving of your Souls, can't convert your selves *from Darknes to Light, from the Power of Satan unto God*. But yet you may imagine your selves able to do that, which shall certainly issue in this happy Change. This is a great Mistake arising principally from a Misunderstanding of the Promises of the Gospel, as to the Subjects thereof : such as we have in *Ezek. 36. 25, 26 &c.* compared with *ver. 37.* and in *Mat. 7. 7.* and in *Luke 11. 13.*

Now Persons in a carnal State, many of them, are ready to entertain a Thought, that by their own
Doings

Doings (tho' they can't properly merit, yet) they are insured of spiritual and saving Mercies, by Virtue of these and such like Promises, which God hath made them in his Word. But this is all a Mistake ; for no graceless Person hath any Claim to one Promise of saving Mercies in the whole Book of God. It's too hard a saying for many to patiently bear, but it's true. The gracious Promises are Children's Bread, they are the peculiar Inheritance of those who, by a saving Faith, are in Christ Jesus, and Christless Souls have no Interest in them ; For the Apostle tells us, that *all the Promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him Amen to the Glory of God by us*, 2 Cor. 1. 20. And if so, What claim have christless Sinners to the Promises ? If God be a Sovereign Dispenser of his saving Graces and Favours and may grant or withhold them according to his mere good Pleasure, as I have endeavour'd before to shew ; then Sinners in their natural State have no Claim to the Promises : For if God had once bound himself by his Promise to any of his Creatures ; he is no more at perfect Liberty either to grant or withhold the promised Blessings, as may please him ; but inviolably holden by his Promise, and it were not just in God to withhold the same.

Let me here shew Sinners in sundry Particulars (at least something of the) Greatness and Danger of this Mistake, which I am speaking of.

1. It must be very dangerous for Sinners still to stick fast on the first Covenant, the Covenant of Works ; because that being once broken, there is no Claim to be made by Virtue of it, to any Thing else but the Curses of it. By Virtue of that Covenant whilst yet unbroken, Man by his own Doings might have certainly entitled himself to God's Fa-

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your and everlasting Happiness. But, how? Why, merely by Virtue of God's Covenant Promise. No Man can ever imagine, that the Obedience required of Man at first, & particularly in that determining Point, *viz.* his refraining to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, could have any Thing at all of absolute or proper Merit in the Nature of it; much less in any Measure equivalent to the Blessings, he would have reaped thereby, had he been obedient; as painful Labours for another are of a Merit equivalent to the stipulated Wages. Now for a poor Sinner to perswade himself, upon what he has done or can do, that he hath a good Claim to converting and saving Mercies by Vertue of the Promises, is nothing more or less, than to stand to this Moment on the Foot of a Covenant of Works, as really in the Essentials of it as ever Man in the Beginning did: And the unhappy Creature is all this while going about to establish a Righteousness of his own, of the same Kind with the Righteousness required under the first Covenant, which consisted in a Compliance with the Condition, on which an happy Immortality was then promised.

2. To suppose that a Sinner in his natural State doth or can do that which will entitle him to the Promises of Grace and Salvation, is quite inconsistent with and contrary to the whole Tenor and main Design of the Gospel, which is perfectly to exclude all Boasting in and of our selves, and to lay the Crown of our Salvation on the Head of rich, free and sovereign Grace thro' Christ Jesus. *Rom. 3. 27.*

3. To suppose that a Sinner by any Thing he can do, may claim the Promises, hath a direct Tendency to render Grace and Glory cheap and contemptible, and to harden Sinners in their Neglect thereof. It's

very

very apparent that many under the Gospel think, that the attaining of a saving Faith in Christ and Repentance unto Life, is nothing so difficult and hazardous as some represent it to be ; and that they need not be so very speedy and earnest in the Quest thereof as some would have them to be. Now one great cause is this sad Mistake we are speaking of. They think that these Blessings, with all others depending thereupon, are secured to them in the Promises : It is but seeking for them in Sincerity, which, they suppose they can do at any Time and they shall certainly find, for God hath promised them ; this makes them careless and dilatory to their Ruin.

On the contrary, it's apparent, that a due Sense of divine Sovereignty in the Dispensations of Grace, hath a happy Tendency to invigorate our Pursuits thereof : if there be any Pertinence in the Apostle's Talk, *Philip. 2. 12, 13. Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling ; for it is God which worketh in you to Will and to do of his good Pleasure.*

4. If it were possible for Persons continuing under this Mistake which I am speaking of, yet to become Subjects of special Grace here, and Glory hereafter ; I can't conceive how it's possible for them to taste a tenth (I was going to say a thousandth) Part of the Sweetness thereof. O, it's the Sovereignty and absolute Freeness of Divine Grace to us (who might have been justly abandoned to eternal Ruin as well as others after our utmost Efforts) which makes it so ravishingly delightful unto our Souls. To this you can all in some good Measure witness, who have (as the Apostle says, *1 Pet. 2. 3.*) *tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

That which shews the exceeding Riches of his Grace in his Kindness toward us, through Jesus Christ, is

this, viz. *that by Grace we are saved through Faith, and that not of our selves, it is the Gift of God, not of Works least any Man should boast.* Eph. 3. 7, 8, 9.

5. To what hath been offered, I shall only add this one Consideration farther under this Head viz. that Converts, who have at first sought regenerating and saving Grace under this Notion, that the Promises of God secure the same to them, on Condition of their own faithful Endeavours in Quest thereof, have been obliged after all their vain Struggles on this Foot, at last to lie down at the Foot of divine Sovereignty and acknowledge that if they perish at last, notwithstanding what they have done, God would remain perfectly just, holy and true, and they justly miserable to Eternity : And that if ever they are saved, it must be from the mere and unpromised Mercy of God thro' Jesus Christ.

That you may all more clearly see this Truth ; suppose the Matter were laid down in Form of a categorick Syllogism thus,

Every adult Person of common Understanding under the Light of the Gospel, who duly improves himself in seeking Regeneration and Salvation by Jesus Christ, is assured by the Promises of God, that he shall obtain the same : But I do so improve myself : Therefore I may rest assured of this, that I shall certainly obtain.

The first Proposition is, that every adult Person of common Understanding under the Light of the Gospel, who duly improves himself in seeking Regeneration and Salvation by Jesus Christ, is assured by the Promises of God, that he shall obtain the same. This Men are naturally very fond of, and accordingly the Sinner under his first Concern for his Soul and Eternity

nity, goes to Work to do something, that may (on this Foot) give him a Claim to converting Grace, and will be disturbed, if a Minister tells him plainly that these his Labours are vain on this Supposition which he goes upon. Let what will be said on the other Side of the Question, the Sinner under his first Awakenings, through the reigning Pride of his Heart scorning to come quite empty handed, will endeavor and think to obtain something, by his own Industry with the common Concurrence of divine Providence in upholding his Being and Faculties, that shall entitle him at least to a Promise of converting Grace. Sundry of you who now hear me and who are hopefully converted, can (I believe) by your own Experience attest to the Truth of this. But now I appeal to you : Say in the Presence and in the Fear of God, who searcheth the Hearts and trieth the Reins of the Children of Men as well as their Ways : can any one single Person among you with a good Conscience assume and say, as in the second Proposition? I have duly improved my self in seeking regenerating Grace and Salvation by Jesus Christ : I have gone as far as possibly I could, without renewing Grace in the Reformation of what I know has been amiss in Point of Omissions, and Commissions, in the closest and most strict Meditation, in the most earnest, vehement and steadily persevering Importunity in Prayerfulness &c. If any of you my Hearers, upon such a Challenge, will venture to assume positively for your selves : I may venture, without the Breach of Charity to say of you : that you are bold as blind Bayard, and therefore bold because stark blind. Every sensible and experienced Christian will (upon his longest Trials this Way) be constrain'd to own : Alas for me ! I have been sadly deficient in my Improvements of

of common Gifts and Advantages ; I might have done very much more and better than I have done, without special renewing Grace. You my Friends who have experienc'd a saving Change (I am morally assured) will, upon a serious Reflection, find your selves obliged to own this, that after all your vain Struggles against it, you have been compell'd to make your dernier Resort to, and fall down at the Foot of divine Sovereignty, and subscribe to that in Rom. 9. 18. *Therefore hath he Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardneth.*

USE II. Of Caution. I would in the Name and Fear of God solemnly warn and caution my self and all that hear me, against the dreadful Abuse of the Doctrine of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace, to the ascertaining our eternal Ruin. Our Text and Doctrine present us with one of the most beautiful sweet and refreshing Flowers of Paradise. But as a Spider or Serpent may extract the most deadly Poison from the same Flower out of which the Bee sucks the richest and sweetest Honey ; so it is with any precious Truth of the Gospel, and this in particular : While it is improved by some to their everlasting Benefit, it's abused by others to their consummate Ruin. Let us then be caution'd against the Abuse of this Doctrine, either in justifying or in any Measure excusing and apologizing for our own Negligence or Indolence, in the Business of our spiritual and eternal Salvation. Some will say, if I was verily persuaded, that God's Mercy flows only from his mere Sovereignty, and that I have no Promise of converting and saving Grace on my own sincere Endeavours ; I would never incline an Ear, nor move an Hand or Foot or Tongue or Thought in the Business of my

Salvation

Salvation, but lazily wait the Event of God's sovereign Pleasure concerning me. Many Sinners there are who talk at this Rate ; some, with a Design to ridicule the Doctrine of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace, as an absurd Doctrine : To these I shall say Nothing more now, than advise them seriously and prayerfully to read the ninth Chapter of Romans and when they have thus read it, let them immediately give up their Cause, or find Brags enough to brand the divinely inspired Apostle *Paul* as the Athenian Philosophers did) for a vain and ridiculous Babbler. Other Sinners there are who allow the Doctrine of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace to be true and certain ; who yet wretchedly pervert the same to their Ruin, or are in great Danger of ; by excusing themselves in the Neglect of utmost Painfulness, Prayerfulness and Perseverance in the Use of all the Means of Grace and Salvation. Now for the Caution of such I recommend these following Considerations.

Consider,

1. If you neglect or become remiss or superficial in your Prayers and the Use of all or any other Means of Grace and Salvation which you are favoured with; you run directly counter to the divine Commands, and thereby take the ready Course to ensure Damnation to your selves. Nothing in the Scriptures is plainer, than that Sinners are enjoin'd by God's preceptive Will, to do that which also the innate Principle of Self-Love well regulated will excite them to, *viz.* that they exert themselves to the utmost in all Religious Duties, in pursuing and endeavouring to secure their spiritual and eternal Well-Being. The Lord Jesus Christ hath commanded Sinners to exert themselves to the utmost in Quest of Grace here and Glory hereafter. Thus he hath done with his own Mouth while

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while bodily present here on Earth, *Luke 13. 24. Strive to enter in at the strait Gate. John 6. 27, Labour for that Meat which endureth to everlasting Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.* And thus did he afterwards by his Spirit in the Mouths and Pens of his Apostles, *Philip. 2. 12. Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling. 2Pet. 1. 10. Give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure.* Then consider,

2. God looseth not his Authority to command, tho' Sinners have forfeited any Claim to the Promises. It must indeed be conceded, that if there were no other Relation betwixt two Parties, than that which is properly foederal, or a Covenant Relation, wherein the Parties are no otherwise obliged to each other than by Compact: In this Case, if either of the Parties once in Covenant with the other (tho' it be by his own Default) forfeits any Claim of the other, he is not any longer holden to the other, any farther than to suffer the Penalty for Breach of Covenant. But if a Superiour, as a King, Parent or Master should see Cause to covenant with his inferior Correlate, and the inferior should, by his own Default, cut himself off from claiming any Benefit by that Covenant; this can do Nothing towards dissolving the native or original Authority of the Superior. So in the present Case, if Sinners have forfeited any Claim to a Promise, this can't dissolve their native Obligation to Obedience.

3. It is an Argument of a fordid mercenary Spirit, that we will not do our Duty, without being first assur'd of Wages for it. What? Will we not take any Pains in the Prosecution of a Business of such vast Importance as that of Grace here and Glory hereafter, on any other Condition than that of God's

God's assuring us beforehand by his Promise, that we shall certainly succeed? How sordid & base were this? See how it looks in the Instance of a poor starv'd perishing Beggar. He is directed to apply for Relief to some noble wealthy, generous Personage, who is able to help, and who hath of his mere Generosity relieved Multitudes under such Circumstances: But now the sturdy Beggar replies, not I, I will not stir a Foot towards him, unless I have first such a Promise of him, that it shall not remain at his mere Pleasure to give or with-hold needed Supplies: I will not go except I may upon his Word first given, boldly challenge at his Hands what I want. In this Case your Indignation against the sordid Wretch would rise to such a Degree, as that you would be provok'd to say of him; e'en let him then die and rot on the Dunghill, if he be so proud and stout. Now in Application of this Simile, I may say to thee, Sinner! whosoever thou art, that thus abusest the Doctrine of the Sovereignty of divine Grace in Manner as before said, as *Nathan* to *David* in the Application of his Parable, thou art the Man or Woman; and would to God, it might have as good Effect.

Again consider,

4. God hath many a Time heard the Prayers even of carnal Persons, of his mere Sovereignty, though he hath never before assured them Audience by any express Promise, especially on their Perseverance and encreasing Importunity; that is to say, he hath graciously granted the Blessings thus askt in Prayer for the Matter of it agreeable with his Will, although the Sins attending the same, arising from a wrong Principle and End, were more than enough to justify God in the Rejection of the Suppliant with Abhorrence. We have a very remarkable Exemplification

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of this in the Case of the Woman of Canaan, recorded in Mat. 15. 22. &c. What the Apostle said of the Ephesians before their Conversion to the Christian Faith, Chap. 2. v. 12. *At that Time ye were without Christ, being Aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World*; was true of this Woman: She was neither a native nor profelyted Israelite, as appears by what Christ said to his Disciples, ver. 24. *I am not sent but to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel*; and to the Woman her self, ver. 26. *It is not meet to take the Children's Bread and to cast it to Dogs*: And the Woman her self never pretends a Claim to any Promise; but perswaded of the Power and Goodness of Christ, she is importunate and persevering in her Cries for Mercy, and is graciously heard and answer'd. And this is the Case with almost all who have been converted in adult Age; their Prayers whilst unconverted have been heard and graciously answered, in the Bestowment of converting Grace, when once they have been fully brought to disclaim any Challenge hereof at the Hands of God, and freely acknowledge that he may either grant or withhold the same as seems good to him. I believe, the Sinner must be made sensible that God is not a Debtor to him by his Promise or any other Way, before he is prepared to receive special Grace.

And I can't but think, that a principal Reason why Sinners pray in vain for a long Time and with considerable Earnestness for regenerating Grace, and find themselves as far off as ever, is because they do all under a Notion that God is at least by his Promise a Debtor to them,

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Poor Sinner yet in vain seeking converting Grace! be prevailed upon to drop any such Pretensions, if you would ever obtain the Mercy you need, and freely acknowledge that God may justly grant or withhold the Mercy, you need, as seems good to him. I know what a Sinner will say for himself here. He will say I am fully convinced that God owes me not converting Grace in Point of strict Justice. I can and do freely own, that if I were everlastingly rejected after all I have done, God would be just and righteous; but my Dependance is on his Veracity in the Promises. Now my dear Friends, stop a Minute here, and consider how inconsistent such Talk or Thoughts are. Can you suppose it consistent with Justice and Righteousness for any one to break his Promise to another? Indeed if the Condition of a Promise bears no Proportion in Value to the Good promised on that Condition; as if a Man should seriously and bona Fide promise me an Estate of an hundred a Year, on the Condition of a Pipe of Tobacco every New-Year's Day; In such a Case the Person can't be supposed under any previous Obligation in Point of Justice ever to make such a Promise. And the making of the Promise is an Act of mere Grace. Yet when he hath once solemnly promised and engaged, he is as really holden in Point of Justice to perform his Promise, as if the Condition was of an equivalent Value. But to proceed, consider,

5. Though a graceless Sinner hath no Claim to a Promise of converting Grace, yet the Promises of this Nature in the Gospel afford unto Sinners great Ground of Encouragement in seeking Conversion, and for this Purpose may be and are justly improved by wise and godly Divines, for the Quickning of

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Sinners in the Quest hereof. Such gracious Passages of Scripture so far as they refer to the unconverted; I look upon as so many Predictions or Prophecies of what the Lord designs, and will in his own Time and Way graciously accomplish, though none can beforehand ordinarily know in particular the designed Subjects. And these Expressions taken in this Sense afford a sufficient Ground of Encouragement to awaken'd Sinners. It seems to me that Sinners, viewing such Scriptures in this Light, have not less but more Encouragement ministred to them, than if they are consider'd as formal Promises made them on certain Conditions therein exprest to be performed by them. Let us for Example take a View of what we have in *Ezek. 36. 25. &c.* *Then will I sprinkle clean Water upon you, and ye shall be clean--a new Heart also will I give you &c.* compared with *v. 37.* *I will yet for this be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them.* Now if we consider these Passages as containing a Promise of regenerating Grace made to Sinners on a Condition to be performed by them; here the awaken'd Sinner will be for ever restless, conscious of his own Failure as to his Compliance with the Condition. But if we consider these Things as a Prediction or prophetical Declaration of God's gracious Purposes towards Sinners, including therein, not only the main End and Design, but also the Means leading thereunto: Here the Sinner finding in himself this gracious Purpose of God operating tho' in the smallest Beginnings, of what is only preliminary or preparatory to Conversion, doth entertain withal a beginning Hope: And as it progressively operates from one Step to another, so the Grounds of Encouragement are still rising; because in this Light he views the whole Work, from the smallest

smallest Beginnings to it's Consummation, in Christ's Hands, *who having begun a good Work will hopefully perform it until the Day of Christ, Philip. 1. 6.* In these Passages of Scripture the Sinner may for his Encouragement, see the Exhibition of the gracious Purpose of God, his almighty Power and infinite Goodness in the Conversion and Salvation of the worst of Sinners; and so be assured of the Possibility of his own Conversion: Which then riseth into some Probability, when he finds (in Pursuance of such a gracious Design) an Heart given to seek regenerating Grace; and the more earnest and persevering he is help'd to be, the higher the probability still rises, because the whole is in the Hand of an infinitely wise gracious and mighty Efficient: And what more can be expected or desired? Once more consider,

6. By your Neglect of Prayerfulness, Painfulness and Perseverance in Quest of Grace and Salvation by Jesus Christ, you take the ready Course to cut your selves off from all Hopes of obtaining. It's agreed on all Hands, not only by those who suppose, that the Sinner is secured of saving Mercies, by the Promises of God, on Condition of his honestly exerting himself in proper Endeavours therefor; but also by those who know that saving Mercies take their Rise from God's mere good Pleasure, as before held forth in this Discourse: I say it's universally agreed, that the careless negligent Sinner, continuing so, hath no Ground at all to hope that he shall ever be saved.

What then dost thou mean poor Sinner, who art striving (not to enter in at the strait Gate, but) to justify or at least excuse thy Neglect of seeking the great Salvation exhibited in the Gospel, by such a wretched perverting of the precious Doctrine of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace? What a Madness is it

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it for thee to take that Pains and Study in arguing and ascertaining thine own Damnation, as some others do in working out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; and for the same general Reason, viz. because it is God that works in us to Will and to do of his own good Pleasure? Unhappy Creature! Art thou then desperately resolved in thine own mind that thou wilt e'n bear Damnation as well as thou can'st? Oh amazing! *Can thine Heart endure or thine Hands be strong in the Day that God shall deal with thee?* Ezek. 22. 14. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring Fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting Burnings? If. 33. 14. But I must proceed to improve the Subject in

USE III. Hence learn, that the very worst of Sinners in this World, under Gospel Advantages are not excluded Hopes of obtaining saving Mercies at the Hands of God, on the Account of either the Greatness or Number, or aggravating Circumstances of their Sins, or their long Continuance hitherto in a State and Course of Sin. Satan that grand Enemy of Souls, always seeking whom he may devour, rocks the Cradle and keeps the Sinner fast asleep in carnal Security and Indolence, as long as possibly he can; and would be glad to have him sleep on and take his Rest, till he be awakned with the Flames of Hell about his Ears. If the Sinner meet with something in the Ministry of Divine Ordinances or Providences, that gives him a little Disrest for a short Time; Satan is watchful to quiet him again as soon as possible before he is thoroughly awakened; by Suggesting to him, either that his Sins that trouble him are small, mere Peccadilloes, what the best of Men are liable to, and yet in a safe Estate, being no more than common Frailties which are overlookt of Course; or

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if they are great in themselves, yet in a considerable Measure excusable on the Account of some extraordinary Provocation or Temptation, that might have mastered the best Man on Earth : If these Devices fail him, he has another at Hand ; he will if possible perswade the Sinner at least to suspend his anxious Concern about his Sins and his Soul for the present, and promiseth him a more convenient Season afterwards. But sometimes these Artifices of Satan for keeping the Sinner asleep, or getting him to sleep again, when he begins to make a Stir, prove not effectual for this Purpose : Now the Devil changes shape and acts the Part of a roaring Lyon, when his serpentine Wiles fail him. He now tells the rowzed Sinner, your Case is desperate ; your Sins are so many, so great in themselves, so highly aggravated and so long continued in, that it is in vain for you to hope for Mercy ; and its best for you to take what sensual Pleasures you can in this World. It is from such Suggestions of the Devil that Sinners say practically as in *Isai. 22. 13, Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we shall die* ; and as in *Jer. 18. 12, There is no Hope, but we will walk after our own Devices, and we will every one do the Imagination of his evil Heart*. God of his Infinite Mercy grant, that none of us may be so ignorant of Satan's Devices, that he may get this Advantage at last of us to consummate our Ruin ! Poor distressed and disconsolate Sinner ! art thou just ready to conclude desperately against thy self, that there is no hope or Help for thee in God, but that thou must inevitably perish everlastingly ; because thy Sins are for Size like the Mountains of the Earth, and for Number like the Sands on the Shore, attended with the most aggravating Circumstances, and long persisted in ? Know thou, that it is the Devil the Father

ther of Lyes, who prompts thee to draw this false Conclusion, tho' from true Premises. Think of the greatness, the Number and aggravating Circumstances of thy Sins as much as thou wilt, the more the better: But withal think of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace thro' Jesus Christ. Never was one Sinner since the Fall of *Adam* therefore converted, pardoned and saved, because he was (antecedent to the Impressions of Divine Grace on his Soul) better than another, or less Criminal than another, but because *God will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, and will shew Mercy to whom he will shew Mercy*.

The Consideration of the Sovereignty of Divine Grace is infinitely more encouraging than discouraging to all who should be encouraged. It is indeed mortifying to the haughty and proud Sinner, and may it give a fatal Stab to the letting out of the very Hearts-Blood of damning Pride & Self-Righteousness: But it's very encouraging to the awakened and deeply convinced Sinner, Such an One may think and justly too, tho' I have been the chief of Sinners, as vile a Miscreant as *Manasseh*, as foul a Debauchee as *Mary Magdalene*, once possessed with seven Devils, as virulent an Opposer and Persecutor of those zealously engaged to build up the Kingdom of Christ in it's Power and Purity as ever *Saul* (afterwards called *Paul*) was while a Pharisee; and even worse than any or all these: Yet if the Grace of God to Sinners be merely sovereign and arbitrary, it may be I may obtain Mercy thro' Christ: *For it is a faithful Saying and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners, of whom (saith the Apostle) I am chief.* 1. Tim. 1. 15.

Moreover, this Doctrine is applicable also in

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Salvation of Sinners. 33

USE IV. For Instruction to those who are reflecting on the State of their own Souls, with a Desire to know what it is.---We are all of us apace going off the Stage of this Life : It is but a little while before the Places that now know us will know us no more : And it's very probable that many of us, now in Company before the Lord in his House, will be in Eternity before the Revolution of another Year. We likewise know that we all have immortal Souls capable of existing seperately in a State of Happiness or Misery during their Separation from the Body ; and that even our Bodies themselves shall be raised at the last Day out of their Dust, and be again animated with the same Souls ; and that there is prepared for the everlasting Entertainment of every one of us, either an Heaven of Happiness, or an Hell of Misery inexpressible, according as we are found in a State of Grace or of Sin, at the Time of our Nature's Dissolution. I hope therefore that many of you are disposed to enquire seriously into your Sate with a sincere Desire to know what it is ; that you may have the greater Comfort and Joy if it be safe ; or if otherwise, that you may fly for your Lives to the alone Hope and Refuge set before you, whilst the Golden Sceptre of Grace is extended, and the Door of Mercy stands open. Now for this Purpose I shall agreeable to this Subject recommend it to you, to enquire closely and impartially in sundry Particulars, in which, I beseech, be faithful to your own Souls.

I. Enquire ; Have you ever had a clear Sense of Divine Sovereignty in the Business of your spiritual and eternal Salvation ? Can you with Understanding and in Sincerity subscribe your Assent to the Truth of our Doctrine ? Think closely what Answer you would return if God himself should demand of you and say ; Sinner ! What thinkest thou ? May I do what I will with mine own ? Is it certain, true and just, that I may distribute special and saving Grace

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and Mercy thro' Jesus Christ to whom I will, and merely because I will? I would with all Humility say to thee, Sinner, as God in another Case to David, 2 Sam. 24. 13. *Advise now and see what Answer I shall return to him that sent me.* If thou canst answer clearly and fully in the affirmative; it is well as far as it goes. But this alone will not discriminate a godly Person, for many in this Point as well others, may seem to have sound Heads, who yet have rotten Hearts. But if thou hesitatest on this Point, but more especially if thou answerest boldly in the Negative; the Examination needs go no farther; there appears upon thee a very black Mark, such as is not the Spot of God's Children. But such an One as answers this first Enquiry in the Affirmative, I beseech farther to enquire,

2. Have you ever been brought to a full Submission to Divine Sovereignty in the Distribution of saving Mercies thro' Jesus Christ? This is a Step far beyond the former: That hath it's Seat in the Head, this in the Heart; that in the Understanding only, this in the Will also; that may be alone without this, but this latter always pre-supposeth the former. Have you, being fully convinced of the Truth of the Doctrine, and notwithstanding a just Sense of the Wrath and Indignation of an holy Sin-hating God against such a fallen guilty Creature as you are, have you humbly cast your self down at the Foot-stool of the Throne of Grace, resolvedly waiting there, until it shall please him to extend saving Mercy to you thro' Jesus Christ, with an Heart disposed to justify God, if after all he should finally reject you? If a well informed Conscience can clearly answer this Enquiry in the Affirmative; the Case looks very hopeful. But I fear some are dangerously deceived in this critical Point: therefore for farther Proof, enquire in the next Place,

3. Have you ever found any considerable Struggling and Opposition in your Hearts against this Submission

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on to Divine Sovereignty? --- Answer honestly. If you have had such Struggles in your Heart; it's strange that you should not be sensible of it: And if your Heart hath never opposed this Submission I am speaking of, I am at least very suspicious that you are Strangers to the Thing it self. Oh! the proud and stout hearted Sinner can't bear to buckle thus. What? To submit to God's sovereign Disposal, without a previous Assurance of a good Issue? No, it's more than Flesh and Blood can bear. Here the Sinner starts back, this is the special critical Point, the distressing Pinch attending the New-Birth: Hitherto come many Sinners who never at last get through this Spot: Here is their *ut plus ultra*; and so the poor Creatures finally perish after very hopeful Beginnings. And those who have at length happily got through these Straits, have ordinarily found a great deal of Difficulty here, through the Reluctancy of their own proud Hearts, who can't easily bear to part with their own Righteousness, of which they must be stript stark naked, or else they can never shoot this Gulf. Are you sensible that you have met with Difficulty in this Spot, and found your Proud Hearts dispose to wrangle against God, thinking it hard that thou must submit at his Foot without Assurance beforehand of a good Issue.

4. Enquire; Have you been ashamed and even confounded on the Account of this your Opposition, and found it at length effectually born down? If so there is great Grounds of Hope in your Case, that the Match betwixt Christ and your Soul will be soon made up, if it be not already consummated; the main Impediment being now removed: Especially if

5. You have hereupon found the Burden, lying on you before, in a great Measure taken off. I believe that the Promise of Rest, which Christ makes to weary and heavyladen Souls coming to him, always takes Place in some sensible Degree, on the Soul's first closing with Christ. And I believe, that if the Rest, that

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a Soul finds, be consequential to the Submission before spoken of, it is an hopeful Symptom of it's Union with Christ. But if present Quietness in a Soul lately distressed be not introduced by this Submission it is a cursed Peace arising either from the Returns of former Stupidity, or rather the governing Prevalence of a self-righteous Spirit. But enquire further,

6. Hath the Ease and Comfort you find in the hopeful Method aforesaid been attended with a deep Sense of your own Vileness on the one Hand, and of the astonishing Riches of divine Grace through Jesus Christ on the other? If not, your Peace is not genuine but spurious and worse than Nothing. But if you now think more meanly of yourselves, and more highly and adoringly of the infinite Riches of Divine Grace in and through Jesus Christ, to such vile, contemptible, ill-deserving Creatures as you are; there is Ground to hope, your Peace is such as Christ has given; and that your State is safe. Especially,

7. If you find hereupon evidently a new Turn of Soul, in all the Powers thereof. That will doubtless always hold ~~that~~ ^{true} which the Apostle tells us, 2 Cor. 5. 17. *If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature, old Things are past away, behold all Things are become new.* How is it with you? Do you find this? The Soul of Man is capable of reflex Acts upon it self. Look within and see, if there be any evident Turn there, in your Understanding, Will and Affections. Have you put off the old Man with his Deeds, and put on the new Man which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him who has created you anew, Col. 3. 9, 10. He that passeth out of a State of Nature into that of Grace, is withal translated out of Darkness into marvellous Light; for God, who commanded the Light to shine out of Darkness, hath shined in our Hearts, to give the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 4. 6. Every true Convert is in the best Sense a new light Man: He sees now as he

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Salvation of Sinners. 37

never saw before : He ^{has} quite a new Scene opening before him. Again, there is a notable Change now in the Will : The Objects of it's Choice on the one Hand, and of it's Rejection on the other, are now the Reverse of what they were before. Those who sincerely take hold on the Covenant, *chuse the Things that please God, Isa. 56. 4.* They now with Moses, *chuse rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season, esteeming the Reproach of Christ greater Riches, than the Treasures in Egypt, Heb. 11. 25, 26.* Once more the Affections now run in new Channels, both the closing Affections, as, Desire, Hope, Love, Joy &c. and the seperating Affections, as, Contempt, Fear, Hatred, Grief &c. These Affections are indeed physically considered, the same as they were ; but they are objectively vastly differing, yea and contrary. Now spiritual and heavenly Things are the Objects of the Souls principal Desire, Hope, Love and Joy ; instead of sinful, or at best merely carnal Enjoyments. Now the Believer treads the Moon under his Feet, looks with Contempt on all the sublunary World, with its Pleasures, Profits and Honours, that before appeared gay and charming. Now *he fears not them which kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul ; but he fears him who is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell ;* not with a slavish, but a filial Fear. Now he is no more as formerly a Hater of God and Holiness, but of Sin ; this is the Object of his implacable Detestation. Now he grieves bitterly not for the Disappointment of his worldly Schemes and Hopes as before, but for his Sins that have seperated betwixt God and him, and occasioned the hiding of God's Face from his Soul, and whereby he hath rendred himself guilty of the greatest Folly and basest Ingratitude ; and he can never enjoy an Hour's Comfort more in any Thing until he can again sensibly find Christ, *whom his Soul loves, and after whom his Soul panteth, as the Hart*
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parteth after the Water-Brooks. Moreover this Change of the Soul in it's several Powers will always influence the practical Conversation unto Holiness, *without which no Man shall see the Lord.* Now Sin will not reign in the mortal Body of a Believer, *that he should obey it in the Lusts thereof, neither will he yield his Members as Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin; but yield himself unto God, as one that is alive from the Dead, and his Members as Instruments of Righteousness unto God.*

But its more then Time, I had concluded. Dearly beloved Friends! who are now reflecting on your State for the Discovery of it, be perswaded honestly, closely and prayerfully to improve the Rules of Trial, which I have laid before you with as much Plainness as I can; together with what other Helps for this Purpose you have had and may yet farther have; and this with a sincere Desire to know the Truth. Hereupon it is highly probable, some of you may find Reason to conclude, that you are yet in a State of Nature, and perhaps others, that you are hopefully in a State of Grace.--- To those of the former Sort,

I have not Time to offer any Thing farther in particular, and must therefore only refer you to, and earnestly beseech, yea and solemnly charge you in the Name of my Lord and Master, as you will answer the Contempt at your utmost Peril another Day; that you heedfully observe the Caution given in Use second, and the encouraging Instruction in Use third, both designedly calculated for your Benefit: The Lord of his Infinite Mercy add his Blessing thereunto.

To those of the latter Sort I shall offer a few Words of Advice.

1. Be humble and thankful. Entertain the meanest Thoughts of your selves, and most thankful and adoring Thoughts of the Infinite Riches of Divine Grace in Christ towards you. *Don't sacrifice to your own Net, nor burn Incense to your own Drug.* Say
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feelingly; *Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy Name, O Lord, be all the Glory.*

2. Be exemplary in Holiness, that the good Ways of the Lord may be well and not ill spoken of on your Account. *Let your Lights so shine before others, that they seeing your good Works may glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* Remember, that unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.

3. Boast not your selves over others. Learn that no one of you be puffed up against another: For who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?

4. Be encouraged to trust and hope in God thro' Christ for all present and future needed Supplies of Grace from Time to Time. If God of his mere Sovereignty hath brought you into a State of Grace, out of a State of Nature, when you could lay no Claim to any Promise of it; how much more may you now, for all needed Supplies trust in Christ, to whom you are united, *in whom the Promises are yea, and in him Amen, unto the Glory of God by us?*

5. Be not diffident concerning others, your Relations and Friends at present in a Graceless and Christless State. But take Pains with them, as far as there appears any the least Probability of it's being serviceable to them: And besure bear them much on your Hearts in Prayer before God, *who can do all Things, and from whom no Thought can be withholden.* Don't let your Hearts sink down under the last Discouragements in the Case of any of them. Remember here two Things.

1. The Sovereignty of Divine Grace. If the Mercy of God takes it's Rise merely from his own sovereign good Pleasure, and not from any Thing first found in the Creature, as you experimentally know in your own Case; you have no Reason to despair of One, who seems at the greatest Remove from any Thing that is Good.

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2. Altho' the poor Christless Sinner hath no Claim to the Promises, yet you (being in Christ Jesus) have a Claim, and may humbly and believingly plead the Promises on behalf of such an One. If what we find in Ezek. 36. 25. &c. where God speaks of regenerating as well as justifying Grace, be lookt upon, not only as a propheticall Declaration of what a gracious God would in his own Time and Way do, as I have herein before considered it; but also as properly a Promise for any to lay hold upon & believingly plead the Accomplishment of; I must suppose that the few truly Godly found among this People, were they to whom this Promise was firstly made, and by whom it was accordingly pleadable, tho' on the Behalf of their graceless Relatives and Friends. And we know, that no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation, 2 Pet. 1. 20. And that the Things formerly written by Divine Inspiration, are written for our Admonition, on whom the Ends of the World are come, 1 Cor. 10. 11. On the whole; I think, dearly beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, that you have sufficient Warrant and Encouragement ministred to you, to be painful with and prayerful for your Graceless, Christless Relatives, especially in such a Day as this; wherein, notwithstanding a vigorous Opposition, Sinners are daily in Companies flocking to the Lord Jesus Christ as Doves to their Windows. The good Lord of his Infinite Mercy grant Success to the faithful Endeavours and fervent Prayers of you and all others, the Children of God, on Behalf of those poor Creatures among us, who are yet without Christ; Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no well grounded Hope, and without God in the World; that they who are yet afar off may be made nigh by the Blood of Christ; to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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